

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG US

SUBJECT: SAYYID MAREI'S COMMENTS ON POLITICAL SITUATION

1. DURING MY CALL ON SAYYID MAREI JAN 27 TO DISCUSS VARIOUS CODEL PROBLEMS, HE ADVERTED TO CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION. MAREI, AS DEPT IS AWARE, IS THE POWERFUL SPEAKER OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY AND CONFIDANT OF PRESIDENT SADAT. HE SAID THE PRESIDENT HAD TELEPHONED HIM AFTER OUR TALK IN ASWAN AND HAD EXPRESSED KEEN DISAPPOINTMENT ABOUT OUR PROCEDURAL SUGGESTION. THE PRESIDENT HAD ULTIMATELY ACCEPTED IT BECAUSE HE FELT US AND ISRAEL HAD ALREADY MADE A DECISION ON HOW TO PROCEED CAUSING SADAT TO BE "BOXED IN". MAREI EXPRESSED PESSIMISM OVER OUTCOME OF OUR EFFORTS, SAYING HE FELT IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE TO PREVENT SITUATION FROM DETERIORATING.

2. MAREI EMPHASIZED HIS CONCERN ABOUT SADAT'S CURRENT VULNERABILITY TO SYRIAN, PALESTINIAN, SOVIET AND LIBYAN SNIPING. HE RECALLED WE HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE PRESIDENT AVOID PRESS COMMENTS THESE NEXT FEW WEEKS. HE ALSO KNEW THAT SADAT, CONSCIOUS OF THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF OUR PROCEDURAL APPROACH HAD IN TURN PROPOSED THAT TWO STEP PROCEDURE NOT RPT NOT BE ANNOUNCED UNTIL THE SECRETARY ARRIVES IN CAIRO. HOWEVER, ISRAELIS HAD LEAKED THE WHOLE BUSINESS AND CORRECTLY INDICATED EGYPTIAN UNHAPPINESS WITH THE PROCEDURE (ASSUME HE WAS REFERRING TO HAARETZ ARTICLE BASED ON WASHINGTON SOURCES AND REPORTED TEL AVIV'S 582).

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THIS DISCLOSURE, ALONG WITH NEW STATEMENTS BY PERES ABOUT

A TEN YEAR AGREEMENT, WILL ADD TO THE PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL PROBLEMS. SADAT, HE FEARED, WILL HAVE AROUND TIME OF IT.

3. MAREI SEEMED PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT PALESTINIAN ATTACKS. HE REFERRED TO A RECENT BROADCAST OF VOICE OF PALESTINE, LOCATED IN CAIRO, CHARGING USG, EGYPT AND JORDAN ARE COOKING UP A NEW DEAL WITH ISRAEL DESIGNED TO UNDERCUT RABAT'S RESOLUTIONS. THE LONGER THE DELAY, HE ARGUED, THE MORE DIFFICULT IT WILL BE FOR SADAT.

4. SINCE I DID NOT KNOW HOW MUCH SADAT HAD TOLD MAREI, AND DID NOT WANT TO TALK SPECIFICS WITH HIM, I LIMITED COMMENT TO ASSURING HIM THAT USG IS FULLY AWARE OF THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS SADAT FACES AND WILL DO UTMOST EXPEDITE ARRIVING AT A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT. AS HE KNEW, THE ISSUE IS TOO COMPLEX TO TRY TO FORCE THE PACE BEYOND WHAT THE TRAFFIC WILL BEAR. MAREI ACKNOWLEDGED THIS TO BE SO, BUT MADE A STRONG PLEA FOR RAPID ACTION. OTHERWISE, HE WARNED, SADAT WILL BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.
EILTS

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